

**Insights on Preparedness Strategy,
State Role in Prevention and Recovery, and State Organization**

Mark Ghilarducci
Vice President
James Lee Witt Associates
February 23, 2006
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA

Build-on and/or Supplement OES by incorporating OHS as a Division of OES

The Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) already has statutorily established functions and capabilities and those functions and capabilities must be properly exercised and supplemented in order to respond effectively to an event. Rather than "recreating the wheel", the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) should be folded into OES as a division. Additionally, in order to resolve the confusion of local officials and emergency responders, one person should be reporting directly to the Governor and speaking on behalf of the State on issues related to emergency management and disasters (natural and man-made). Existing statute already names the Director of OES.

State and Federal Government Must Coordinate, Not Control Local Government

The role of both State and federal government during disasters is to support local governments and ensure that the necessary resources needed are provided for in a timely and effective manner (State and federal government have both specialized and complementary resources). Therefore, when the impact of a disaster increases in complexity and scope, State and federal government needs to coordinate in conjunction with local government, as opposed to taking over it, to ensure that local government does not fail in supporting the needs our citizens. Therefore, we as a State must make sure that the following occurs both on a State and local level:

- Make sure that relationships and partnerships are developed to ensure for robust coordination and to take care of our citizens during a catastrophic event.
- Sign pre-event contracts for food, water, ice, shelters, housing, and other necessities.
- Prepare, exercise and drill for all-hazards events
- Prioritize and provide sufficient funding for emergency management and response-related programs, resources and assets.

To this same point, as the State should not take control of local government, State government should not be taken control of by the federal government. We must maintain our State sovereignty, the Governor's authority and control of our National Guard to manage and support overall disaster operations. "Federalizing" would in effect tie the State's hands and essentially relinquish decision-making authority relative to response and recovery to the federal government.

Develop Surge Capacity Plans to Handle, Care and House Those In-Need

California should have a surge capacity plan for hospitals, shelters, and schools. In a mass casualty or catastrophic event, we must plan better on how we are going to handle the massive number of folks, especially at-risk populations (seniors, special-needs population, etc.) who will need medical care, shelter and other assistance. California should have a plan to house hundreds of thousands of people AFTER a catastrophic event and ensure that medical and health providers are prepared to handle the surge.

Public-Private Sector Solutions to Ensure Preparedness and Expedite Recovery

Before a disaster strikes, the State and businesses must work together so that we know what resources businesses can bring and not wait until after a disaster strikes. Both the private and public sectors rely on one another for the sake of economic and operational continuity. The State must do more to partner with businesses to not only find out what additional resources are available during a crisis, but also to include them in planning to see what they need to continue operating after a disaster strikes. Incorporating private sector leadership and resources into public disaster preparedness efforts would expedite the recovery process while simultaneously allowing for the business and governmental continuity necessary to support communities in the aftermath of a disaster.